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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000105

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2016

TAGS: PREL MOPS KPKO CG UG SU GT UN

SUBJECT: EIGHT UN SOLDIERS, 14 LRA KILLED IN FIRE FIGHT

REF: KINSHASA 100

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (U) As reported reftel, MONUC Director of Information Kemal Saiki confirmed that eight Guatemalan peacekeepers were killed January 23 in an operation against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Garamba National Park near the Sudanese border.

¶2. (C) In a separate conversation January 23, MONUC Head of Office in Bunia, Sharouh Sharif, told PolOff that Guatemalan special forces were attacked by approximately 60 Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) soldiers in Garamba National Park the morning of January 23. Ituri Brigade Commander Brig. General Anwar Ibn Noor confirmed in a subsequent conversation that eight Guatemalans were killed and five were injured in the fire fight. (Note: Earlier reports had indicated that 14 Guatemalans had been injured. End note.) General Noor said 14 LRA soldiers were killed in the incident.

¶3. (C) According to Sharif, the Guatemalans had been on an "intelligence-gathering mission" in the Garamba Park area for "about the past two weeks." (Note: Saiki earlier described the Guatemalans as being "engaged in reconnaissance activities for the past 10 days." End note.) Sharif said the group was tasked with determining the location of any LRA soldiers still on DRC territory. On the morning of January 23, Sharif said the Guatemalans were on patrol in Garamba Park near the DRC-Sudanese border when they came across an LRA camp.

¶4. (U) Saiki reported that the engagement between the two sides lasted about four hours. The Guatemalan troops called for MONUC air reinforcements in the form of attack helicopters. A MONUC Nepalese contingent was also airlifted by helicopter to the scene to search and cordon off the area.

¶5. (C) Sharif said MONUC is considering plans for a retaliatory strike against the LRA elements responsible for the attack. Sharif said MONUC would be requesting a "significant" force to take out the LRA troops, but the size of such a force has not yet been determined. General Noor, however, said no military action was "imminent."

¶6. (SBU) Those wounded in the attack have been returned to Bunia for medical treatment and are expected to be transferred to Kisangani January 23. The bodies of those killed will be sent to Entebbe and onward to their native country. General Noor said all of the remaining special forces team had also been extracted successfully from the Garamba area.

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